Mundelein, IL -- As part of his continuing efforts to prevent implementation of a proposed federal regulation that would require trains to blow their horns at all railroad crossings, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) joined members of a multi-jurisdictional task force to announce the results of an "Automated Wayside Horn System" study. The task force, convened by the Village of Mundelein, hired Northwestern University's Center for Public Safety to conduct the automated train horn evaluation.

"Safe railroad crossings are a top priority in our communities," said Congressman Kirk. "I am very encouraged by the results of this comprehensive study which revealed that use of the Automated Wayside Horn System resulted in a 70 percent decrease in highway violations at rail crossings and an 80 percent noise level reduction near the tracks. According to this report, wayside horns increased public safety, reduced the impact of train horns on our quality of life and will save money as communities work to comply with the FRA train whistle mandate. I applaud the Villages of Mundelein, Libertyville and Vernon Hills for taking the lead in initiating the task force which lead to this study that I intend to hand deliver to Federal Railroad Administrator Allan Rutter in Washington."

In August of 2001, Congressman Kirk brought FRA Administrator Rutter to the 10th District to emphasize local opposition to the federal train whistle mandate and for a first-hand look at communities where implementation of the current FRA regulation would mean that a train traveling through some communities where intersections are very close would be continuously blowing its' horn.

"Our suburban mayors and village presidents have joined the effort to prevent this train whistle mandate from destroying our quality of life and diminishing our property values," said Congressman Kirk. "The study being released today indicates we do not have to forgo safety to protect our quality of life and still comply with federal law. I will ask the FRA to consider the Automated Wayside Horn System as an alternative to train horns proposed to satisfy the federal mandate."

The task force, which began meeting in June 1999, consists of the Villages of Mundelein, Libertyville and Vernon Hills, the Federal Railroad Administration, Illinois Commerce Commission, Illinois Department of Transportation, Metra, Wisconsin Central, Canadian National Railroad, Lake County Department of Transportation, Northwestern University, and Railroad Controls, Ltd. After numerous meetings, the task force succeeded in obtaining state and federal funding to install nine automated horns on an experimental basis (from Paterson to

Butterfield Road), and federal funding to conduct a study of the effectiveness of the horns as a safety device and at reducing the noise disturbances to the community. The Village of Mundelein, and members of the task force, asked the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety to evaluate the effectiveness of a demonstration installation of wayside horns.

The study was conducted with federal and local matching funds under auspices of the Federal Railroad Administration and Volpe National Transportation Research Center. Although the horns are installed at all nine crossings in or near the Village, only three were used in evaluation. The horns were installed at an average cost of $52,000 per location and activated in March 2002.

To satisfy the safety and quality of life objectives of the study, data was gathered for five measures: motorists violations of the crossing gates, sound levels at various distances along the roadway approaching the crossing, sound levels in occupied areas at various distances from the railroad crossings, train engineers' perceptions of safety, and residents' perceptions of quality of life as related to the sound levels.

The Automated Wayside Horn System is a stationary horn system activated by the railroad-highway grade crossing warning system. The automated horn system, which is designed to sound like a train horn, is mounted at the crossing, rather than on the locomotive, to deliver a more consistent audible warning to motorists and pedestrians while eliminating noise pollution in neighborhoods for more than half a mile along the rail corridor.

For more information on Automated Train Horns, visit http://www.house.gov/htbin/leave_site?ln_url=http://www.railroadcontrols.com/ahs
.